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BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Lester B. Shippee

Modern democracies. In two volumes. By James Bryce (Viscount Bryce) (New York: The Macmillan company, 1921. 508, 676 p.)

The author was born in 1838, and in 1862, the second year of our civil war, at the age of twenty-four, he published *The holy Roman empire*. At the age of fifty he gave us *The American commonwealth*, and now, in the late autumn of his life, we are again deeply indebted to him, this time for the masterly summing up of his political wisdom and of his knowledge of political democracy contained in these two splendid volumes. His equipment for writing this particular work has not been excelled, perhaps, in our times. The accumulated observations of many years of travel to the very ends of the earth, unusually wide reading in history, politics, and philosophy, over forty years of practical political experience as a leader in the old liberal party, unquenchable hopefulness, a Celtic sense of humor, a fine ability to write clear, expressive English, sanity, and a ripe judgment — all these and more are his. The result is a book which is a permanent contribution to the best literature of political science.

Democracy, as Bryce defines it, is “that form of government in which the ruling power of a state is legally vested, not in any particular class or classes, but in the members of the community as a whole” (1: 20). Putting aside all irrelevant subjects and materials, the author concentrates his attention upon the problems of democracy as such. Politics is everywhere given the chief emphasis; constitutional law, governmental organization, administrative problems, and the social and economic movements which to-day agitate the political waters in all democracies are touched upon only in passing. They are the light curtain upon which is thrown the silhouetted figure of democracy.

In fifteen introductory chapters the author considers the more important problems common to all democracies, such as liberty, equality, education, religion, the press, parties, local self-government, and public opinion. From these he passes to Athens, as typical of ancient republics, and thence to the pseudo-democracies of South and Central America, which he discusses sketchily before taking up a group of actual democracies of to-day: France, Switzerland, Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Of the six, Canada receives the shortest

and the United States the longest treatment (52 and 165 pages respectively). In twenty-three closing chapters the author has given us his ripe observations on the workings of democracy, dealing with the decline of legislatures, the executive in a democracy, direct legislation, the money power in politics, democratic political leadership, and kindred topics. Everywhere he knows and faces the facts, and everywhere in his treatment of them he is sympathetic toward the people under discussion.

The discussion of our own democratic institutions is new, although it is perfectly possible to trace back many of the observations to *The American commonwealth*. Bryce is fully aware that many changes have been made in our political life in the past forty years, and by numerous deft touches he shows that he has not failed to note and to examine them. The perversions of the party system, the inefficiency and corruption in municipalities, the lax enforcement of criminal law, the fumbling incapacity of congress, and other defects are commented upon as fully as space will permit, and yet everywhere the author is sympathetic rather than caustic, and gives reasons why affairs are not better managed than they are. He rejoices at every sign of improvement, but withal the picture of democracy in operation is everywhere somber enough.

What is then the conclusion? Has democracy failed? The author appears to be disappointingly hopeful, almost apologetic. Affairs are not as near perfection as he and other early and ardent friends of democracy had hoped they would be—but of course they expected too much. No, speaking generally, “the experiment has not failed, for the world is after all a better place than it was under other kinds of government, and the faith that it may be made still survives. . . . Hope, often disappointed but always renewed, is the anchor by which the ship that carries democracy and its fortunes will have to ride out this latest storm as it has ridden out many storms before.”

WILLIAM ANDERSON

Woodrow Wilson and his work. By William E. Dodd. (New York: Doubleday, Page and company, 1920. XIV, 369 p.)

It is gratifying to those who admire Woodrow Wilson and a challenge to his critics for an historian with Mr. Dodd's reputation to assert that “the career of President Wilson and his services to his country and to mankind in general are so well defined and fairly rounded out that historians may not long postpone their estimate of both the man and his work.” That this estimate is to be a very high one in the opinion of Mr. Dodd no one can doubt who reads his work. “Of purposes and ideals,” he writes, “no man has ever spoken more plainly or written